

These two documents should be synchronized and should address live-fire as well as blank-fire events up to at least platoon level.

- Sufficient training ammunition should be allocated to support the programs listed above.

- FM 23-12 should be updated and re-published to prescribe the basic techniques and SOPs that enable the squad leader to effectively integrate and control the direct fires of his organic and supporting weapons.

- FM 23-16 should also be updated and re-published to provide doctrine and techniques for squad automatic rifle marksmanship with the M249 SAW.

- The 11B20 Soldier's Manual fire control task (071-326-5501) should be rewritten to include not only what to do but how to do it. Assault tech-

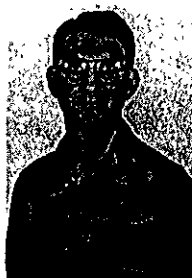
niques, methods of fire control, the squad fire command, and the integration of direct fires should all be addressed.

- Appropriate tasks for fire distribution using the M16A1 rifle, M203 grenade launcher, M60 machinegun, and M249 SAW should be added to the 11B10 Soldier's Manual.

The integration of tactical training and the techniques of fire control at squad level are fundamental to success in combat, yet this vital area has been virtually ignored by the Army's doctrine writers, trainers, and training managers. If the recommendations listed above were adopted, they would make a significant contribution to raising the training curve and, consequently, the combat readiness of our rifle squads, the real cutting edge of our combat power.



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## Winning at the NTC: The Delay

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In this continuing series on the battles fought at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, we have examined a movement to contact, a deliberate attack, and a defend in sector mission. We have also looked at reconnaissance, fire coordination, and command and control. This article examines one of the most difficult of all operations, the delay.\*

This particular battle took place in the "Valley of Death," which is a narrow valley that has almost impassable mountains to its north and south. The western end of the valley,

about two kilometers wide, terminates in an escarpment known as "The Shelf." West of The Shelf, the terrain is extremely restricted until it drops away to the "Langford River" (actually a road with designated "fording sites"). The terrain is fairly open west of the river and gradually becomes more rugged until it takes on an extremely restricted character in the vicinity of Hill 1045. The key terrain features, from east to west, are Hill 692, The Shelf, Hill 785, the fording sites, The Porkchop, Hill 931, and the 1045 hillmass (see the accompanying map).

A task force was ordered to delay in sector against an expected attack from the east. It was to delay the enemy forward of the 1045 hillmass for 24 hours.

The task force established its initial delay positions on The Shelf, with Team Alpha on the right (south), Team Bravo in the center, and Team Charlie on the left (north). An obstacle consisting of an antitank ditch, mines, and wire was to be constructed across the valley west of hill 692, and an engineer company was attached to the task force for this purpose.

The scout platoon was to screen forward of Hill 692. On its way back after doing its job, it was to close a gap that had been left in the obstacle specifically for its use. The company commanders were directed to prepare delay positions in the vicinity of Hill 785 and to reconnoiter other positions in the vicinity of Hill 931.

Just at dawn, a number of OPFOR

\* This is the seventh and last in this series. The views expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Defense or any element of it.

reconnaissance vehicles passed through the obstacle and penetrated the task force's position. One BRDM was knocked out as it passed between Teams Alpha and Bravo on its way to the task force's rear area; the other OPFOR vehicles made it successfully. OPFOR dismounted patrols took possession of the gap in the obstacle. The scout platoon, operating forward of Hill 692, apparently was unaware of this activity.

Shortly afterward, clouds of smoke and dust heralded the approach of the vehicles of the OPFOR mechanized rifle regiment. The task force's scout platoon passed a call for fire, then headed rearward for the gap in the obstacles, only to run into the OPFOR dismounted patrols.

From the main position, the entire Valley of Death seemed to be filled with smoke. Through the haze, the dim shapes of armored vehicle launched bridges (AVLBs), tanks, and BMPs could be seen. There were so many of them and they were coming so fast (about 15 to 20 kilometers per hour) that they simply presented more targets than the friendly forces could engage.

Now BMPs and tanks began to appear to the south of Hill 692. Here they were masked by Hill 692 from Team Charlie and from most of Team Bravo's left flank weapons as well.

As the two lead motorized rifle bat-

talions closed with Team Alpha, the order was given to pull back to the next delay position. By this time Teams Alpha and Bravo were engaging tanks and BMPs at ranges of 500 to 1,000 meters. As the teams began to pull out of position, they were overrun and destroyed.

Team Charlie, completely unengaged, was able to pull out of its positions and form a column. But as the column began to move, it was hit by the second echelon motorized rifle battalion and destroyed.

## ANALYSIS

In analyzing the destruction of the task force, it is immediately obvious that there was inadequate counter-reconnaissance. The OPFOR was able to penetrate the task force's obstacle by stealth and then to use the obstacle to ambush and destroy the scout platoon.

The task force's plan had envisioned a major engagement area in the vicinity of Hill 692, but it had failed to take into consideration the importance of Hill 692, which the OPFOR units used to mask their attack on Team Alpha.

The task force apparently had also failed to realize how fast the OPFOR would be able to move, and it simply had too few weapons to deal with the vast array of targets in a short time.

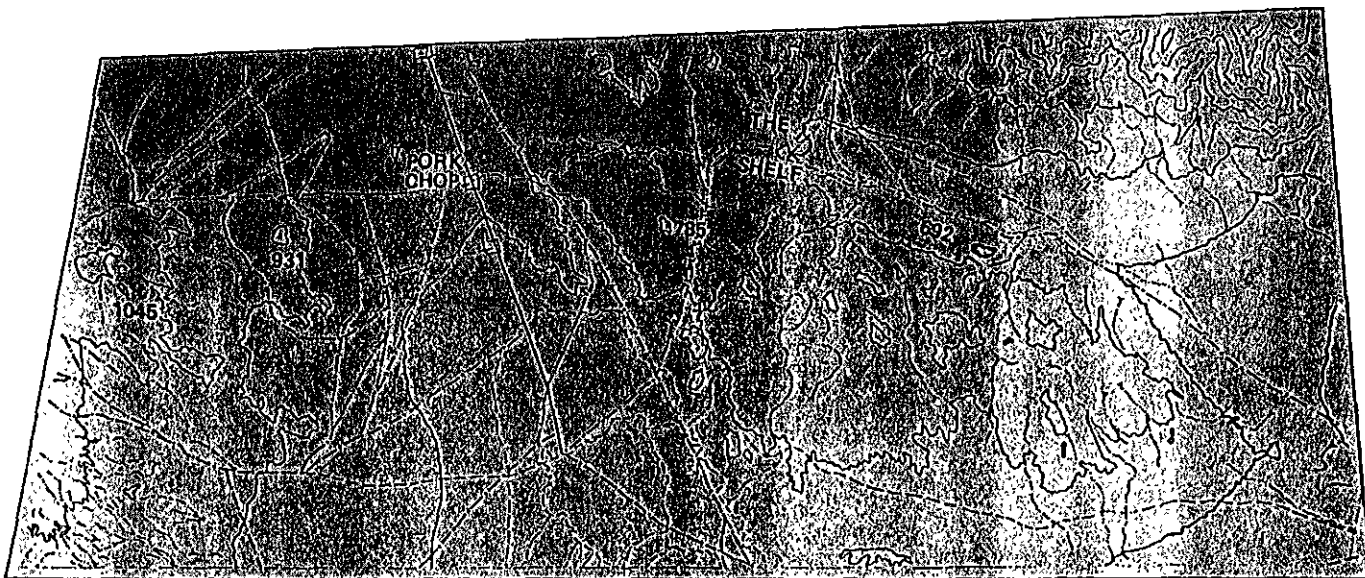
This problem was compounded by the poor positioning of the units and weapon systems, the failure of the units and weapon systems to reposition as the battle progressed, and the liberal use of smoke by the OPFOR.

The delay was doomed to failure from the very beginning, in fact: At 12 kilometers per hour, the OPFOR can cover 2,000 meters in 10 minutes (and they usually move even faster than that). Even the best trained units cannot pull out of a defensive position in less than five minutes, nor can they occupy their next position in less than five more minutes. It is obvious, then, that a task force in a delay role will be overrun if it allows the OPFOR units to approach closer than 2,000 meters — unless some provision is made to slow them down.

Many units will allow the OPFOR to close to 1,500 or even 1,000 meters before beginning a withdrawal. But by the time they reach their next delay position, the OPFOR units are usually right behind them, and they have to keep going, hoping to gain enough distance to occupy a battle position *somewhere*. (This race is known as the "Irwin 500," and it is a thrilling spectacle!)

## HOW IT MIGHT HAVE GONE

An alternative solution begins with the scout platoon. Reinforced with



two TOWs and two tanks; it operates well forward of Hill 692. There, the tanks and TOWs are placed in the gullies and behind small hills on both sides of the Valley of Death, between 1,000 and 2,000 meters east of Hill 692. One mechanized rifle platoon, under the command of Team Alpha, is made responsible for the obstacle west of Hill 692.

Team Alpha, a tank-heavy team, is then assigned responsibility for the engagement area forward of the obstacle and is positioned on The Shelf. A TOW section is attached and is initially positioned on The Shelf with instructions to withdraw to Hill 785 as soon as the OPFOR reaches the obstacle.

### MEANTIME

In the meantime, Team Bravo prepares platoon battle positions in the vicinity of The Porkchop, covering the fording sites on the Langford River and emplacing a TOW section so that the area between Hill 785 and The Porkchop is covered by fire.

Finally, Team Charlie occupies positions in the vicinity of Hill 931, with the remainder of the task force's TOWs in position to cover the approaches to the river and the fording sites.

As the OPFOR approaches, the scout platoon gives an early warning and calls for fire, keeping the approaching OPFOR under indirect fire as it closes. The attached tanks and TOWs allow the OPFOR either to draw even with their concealed positions or to pass them. Then they fire into the OPFOR's flanks and rear. As the attack progresses, the scout platoon, with its attachments, follows the OPFOR units and continues to fire on them from behind.

As the OPFOR nears the obstacle, they are taken under long range TOW fire from The Shelf. They are also engaged by the mechanized rifle platoon that is defending the obstacle as well as by the reinforced scout platoon in their rear.

The obstacle serves as a "trigger

line." As soon as the OPFOR units reach it, Team Alpha's TOWs pull back. The tanks continue to fire to cover the TOWs' withdrawal. From their new positions in the vicinity of Hill 785, the TOWs can fire on the obstacle at long range.

At this time the battle approaches a critical decision point: If the OPFOR has been slowed appreciably, the task force commander may elect to continue the fight from The Shelf, reinforcing Team Alpha with additional TOWs. Otherwise, Team Alpha passes control of the mechanized platoon in the obstacle to the scouts and begins its pullback, overwatched by the TOWs. Platoons and tanks that cannot pull out remain in position and slug it out. If they are bypassed by the OPFOR, they come under the control of the scout platoon and join it in following the OPFOR units and shooting them up from the rear.

Preplanned areas of scatterable mines are used to help Team Alpha's withdrawal. Initially, the mines are used just forward of The Shelf and then, once Team Alpha leaves The Shelf, they are used between The Shelf and Hill 785.

Team Alpha does not stop at Hill 785 — there isn't enough standoff distance from the previous battle positions to make this a practical delay position for the entire team. (But it does offer a good secondary position for the TOWs.)

As Team Alpha heads for the fording sites, Team Bravo's attached TOWs take up the battle. Mines are again fired, this time on the fording sites as soon as Team Alpha crosses. Team Alpha continues to Hill 931.

This is the second critical decision point in the battle. If Team Alpha is still in fighting condition, it occupies the positions around Hill 931, and Team Charlie pulls back to new positions near Hill 1045. There are two other courses of action: Team Alpha can either reinforce Team Charlie's positions or occupy the positions near Hill 1045.

If the OPFOR units succeed in forcing a crossing of the Langford River, Team Bravo remains in posi-

tion, then repositions itself to fire on the OPFOR from the rear. At the same time, the forces in position near Hills 931 and 1045 continue the battle.

The alternate plan produces six engagement areas (EAs). EA1, primarily an artillery engagement area, is well to the east of The Shelf — about 12 kilometers. If attack helicopters are available, this is where they would make their first attack.

EA2 is on the east side of the obstacle, where the OPFOR units present a lucrative target when they are slowed by the obstacle. Tanks and TOWs (from both The Shelf and the scout platoon), artillery, and infantry units at the obstacle participate in this part of the battle. This is where the second helicopter attack takes place.

EA3 is between the obstacle and The Shelf. TOWs from the vicinity of Hill 785 cover the tanks as they withdraw, and the third helicopter strike is made.

EA4 is the area between Hill 785 and the Langford River; EA5 is between Hill 931 and The Porkchop; and EA6 is between Hill 1045 and Hill 931.

Notice how this scheme of maneuver meshes with the refueling and rearming actions of an attack helicopter company. It keeps the OPFOR under attack as it closes; takes advantage of the planned "pile up" in front of the obstacle; ensures that at least one attack helicopter platoon (and probably two) is available during the critical withdrawal from The Shelf; and continues to engage the OPFOR at every likely area, all the way back to the 1045 hillmass.

### LESSONS LEARNED

Several lessons can be learned from this delay action. First, the OPFOR moves so fast and presents so many targets that the U.S. task force's weapon systems cannot engage enough of them to slow the OPFOR appreciably, unless they increase the engagement time by slowing the OPFOR or